
Interim Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sian Jones

Christine Jardine MP
Liberal Democrat Treasury Spokesperson
House of Commons
(via email)

11 May 2022

Dear Ms Jardine,

Thank you for bringing the use of employment statistics during Prime Minister's Questions on 27 April to my attention. The Prime Minister should be clearer in his claims around employment now compared to before the pandemic began.

While there are now more people on payrolls than before the pandemic, this increase is more than offset by the reduction in the number of people who are self-employed: in total, the number of people in employment, and the employment rate, are lower than before the pandemic. As you noted, Sir David Norgrove wrote¹ to the Prime Minister highlighting the risk of giving "a misleading impression of trends in the labour market" unless the distinction between number of people on payrolls and number of people in employment is clearly explained.

In addition to Sir David's letter on 24 February, Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation wrote to Laura Gilbert², Director of Data Science at 10 Downing Street, on this matter on 1 February. My office has also been in touch with the 10 Downing Street briefing team on a number of occasions.

The UK Statistics Authority seeks to protect the role of statistics in public debate; we want to see statistics used and interpreted appropriately. We will continue to emphasise the importance of accuracy and clarity with Number 10, and work with producers to present statistics in ways which minimise the risk of misuse.

Finally, you may also be interested to know that ONS is in the process of transforming its labour market statistics, to include a much larger and more modern household survey complementing increased use of administrative data. Starting in 2023, they should provide even more robust estimates of developments in the labour market.

Yours sincerely,



Sian Jones
Interim Chair of the UK Statistics Authority

¹ [Sir David Norgrove to the Prime Minister – Employment Statistics](#), 24 February 2022

² [Ed Humpherson to Laura Gilbert: Statements on the number of people in work](#), 1 February 2022